

Regional rural radio network for the Caribbean: second meeting

Seminar proceedings

Montserrat, 12-13 December 1994



**THE SECOND MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL RURAL RADIO NETWORK FOR THE CARIBBEAN**

Montserrat, West Indies 12–13 December 1994

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The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) was founded in 1975 as an autonomous institution of 12 member countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The member countries are: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago. The governing body is the Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Agriculture, and the board of directors is drawn from member governments and regional agencies.

CARDI's mission statement is: *To accelerate sustainable agricultural development through strategic management of those processes that generate, transfer and commercialize appropriate technology that will improve the social and economic well-being of Caribbean people.*

**PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SECOND MEETING
OF THE
REGIONAL RURAL RADIO NETWORK
FOR THE CARIBBEAN**

Montserrat, West Indies 12–13 December 1994

**THE CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
University Campus, St Augustine
Trinidad and Tobago**

**THE TECHNICAL CENTRE FOR
AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL COOPERATION
(ACP-EU Lome Convention)
Ede-Wageningen, The Netherlands**

April 1995

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OPENING CEREMONY

Chairman: Claude Browne
CARDI, Montserrat

Rapporteur: Denyse Johnston
CARDI, Trinidad and Tobago

Kitts and Nevis. Today we are pleased that representatives from both Antigua and St Kitts and Nevis are participating in this meeting.

The resolution called on CARDI to:

- Clause 2: advise regional governments, through CARICOM, of the commitment to a regional rural radio network.
- Clause 3: provide assistance in recommending and supporting the structure, funding and function of the network.

CARDI, through its Governing Body (which comprises the ministers responsible for agriculture in the CARICOM countries), has fulfilled Clause 2 of the resolution passed last year. The fact that we are gathered here to launch the regional radio network with technical assistance and funding from CARDI and CTA is an indication of CARDI's responsiveness to its clients and collaborators as well as a fulfillment of Clause 3 of the resolution passed last year. Let me hasten to add that CARDI's relationship with the RRN does not stop at the fulfillment of Clauses 2 and 3. In fact we are committed to see the RRN through its incubation phase and on to maturity. CARDI and CTA stand willing to provide technical and other assistance to the RRN.

CARDI and the region stand to benefit from an effective functioning RRN. The reason relates directly to the role that CARDI plays in the development of technical know-how and the importance of moving this know-how to regional farmers.

Through its research programmes CARDI has built up a reputation as the leading institution in the generation of agricultural technology in the Caribbean. Research is concerned with problem solving – generation and validation of technology. Extension is principally concerned with transfer or dissemination of technology. Both systems must be integrated if their full potential is to be realized. It is in the latter that radio can indeed play a useful role in bettering the lives of Caribbean farmers. CARDI views the radio as a critical component in the dissemination of technological information to the farming community.

This dissemination of STI through radio could be viewed as a complement to the work of agricultural extension and should not be seen as a replacement for agricultural extension. CARDI recognizes the link between agricultural research and extension and over the past 10 years has built up a strong research and extension linkage with national and regional programmes.

In 1989, the integration of the Caribbean Agricultural and Rural Development Advisory and Training Service (CARDATS) project within CARDI provided the Institute with a good cadre of highly trained technology transfer specialists with wide experience in rural development. Also, the implementation of the Agricultural Research and Extension Project (AREP) in 1989 directly linked CARDI's research with the extension department of the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the extension systems in the MoAs. It was from these projects that the task force methodology was developed and is now widely used in CARDI and the MoAs for commodity development. Radio is important to the further strengthening of this research extension linkage.

The overriding objective of development radio programmes is to disseminate information to a wider audience at low cost; radio offers the best medium to achieve this goal. Rural development radio programmes are produced and provide information on agriculture, education, nutrition and health. Today we all face the same challenge: How can we use radio to better the lives of our rural population and individuals involved in agricultural production?

As CARDI begins the implementation of its new medium term and strategic plans, the Institute seeks to operate in a 'networking mode'. Networking brings together CARDI's partners, mainly the national agricultural systems, the NGOs and regional institutions, in a collaborative effort to not only identify but also tackle the main constraints to the production and marketing systems and hopefully bring about the alleviation of these constraints and the establishment of viable and sustainable systems. CARDI is therefore involved in the vegetable networks, the IPM network, the livestock network and the RRN. Part of the approach by the Institute is to become involved and undertake responsibility for initiating and coordinating the networks. The networks will also actively seek suitable partners for backup in strategic research among the wider agricultural research community.

Let me now share with you a few words on networking from the CTA newsletter Spore of April 1992 and an article written by Dr John Farrington:

- A network is a group of institutions or individuals who share information on subjects of common interest. Networking allows for interaction among its members. Networking aims for greater immediacy than written journals and allows for sharing of preliminary results of work in progress.
- Networks focus on a narrow subject matter, e.g., vegetables or in this case rural radio.
- Networks generally consist of individuals who are motivated to contribute in some meaningful way to the network. As a result a network is normally highly responsive to its members' needs.
- Through networking information that is not normally published is made available to members. This allows for information to be shared that normally would have been unknown.

It is therefore important that we see ourselves in the RRN as a family because a family not only shares but cares. We must share information with each other and among ourselves and we must also care for the well-being of our client, the farmer.

A critical objective of this meeting is the launching of the rural radio network and the development of a work programme for 1995/96.

Mr Chairman, the network offers the opportunity for information to be shared among countries in the region and should also lead to reduced costs and improved efficiency and avoid unnecessary duplication. We see the sharing of information and programmes across borders. For example, what is envisaged is that a programme produced

on onion technology in Nevis could be aired in St Kitts and better yet, listeners in Montserrat could be encouraged to tune in to programmes in Nevis for specific STL. This not only applies to radio but also television and newspaper articles.

It is important that we package information in a form that farmers, urban housewives who cultivate backyard gardens to supplement their family nutrition, hobby gardeners and other end-users of technology, can not only access the information, but are able to utilize this information in improving the production, productivity and competitiveness of their commodities.

We must be aware that the effort we put into the implementation of the decisions made at this meeting will have an impact on the lives of individuals engaged in agriculture. Let me remind you that the RRN could only be as successful as the willingness, involvement and dedication of its members. It is therefore important that we attach significance and commitment to the implementation of the decisions and recommendations from this meeting. CARDI and CTA wish you a successful and fruitful meeting.

FEATURE ADDRESS

The Honourable Charles Kirnon
Minister of Agriculture, Trade and Environment, Montserrat

Mr Chairman; Distinguished Guests and Delegates; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me join the other speakers in extending a warm welcome to our visiting delegates and to wish you a productive workshop and a memorable stay on the Emerald Isle.

Development of the region in these economic times is hard and faced with several obstacles. In the first instance, we are small by world standards and so must compete for our very survival. It is therefore important that we plan carefully, ensuring that the people at all levels are attune with what is happening around them and indeed on the international scene. In this planning process, therefore, it is important that the linkages between the various sectors be recognized.

I am pleased that the Rural Radio Network and the agricultural sector recognize the need to collaborate, thus empowering the farmers by the constant supply of information.

I am also pleased that Montserrat was chosen as the venue for the second meeting. I am sure, however, that with Montserrat's tradition of radio service to the region, with three radio stations, namely Radio Montserrat which is one of the oldest stations in the region, the big RA (Radio Antilles) and Gem Radio, there could have been no better place to discuss radio programming.

When I heard about rural radio, I wondered why the distinction. Our radio in Montserrat has always been geared towards the rural people and maybe this has accounted for its success. In Montserrat, and I dare say in the OECS, we have no real urban people — everybody is connected with rural life in some way. We have our backyard gardens or we have our brother and sister living in the country. We do not have city life as such. Hence rural radio is what we know and what we should continue to promote.

I am also pleased that you are looking at making scientific and technical information (STI) more easily understandable to the people who have to use it. I know agriculture faces a lot of challenges and circumstances are changing everyday, so we need this scientific work to continue in order to face and handle these challenges. However, when the work is completed it must be presented to the farmers who will use it in a simplified manner.

For I am sure that you are aware that if the information is geared for academics, those we seek to inform, namely farmers, will simply ignore these instructions and continue as usual or try their own thing. All of your efforts and all of the resources put into this scientific work will then be wasted and as Caribbean people we cannot afford to waste scarce resources.

We must recognize that the idea of networking between Caribbean people is an efficient way of utilizing our scarce resources — we can share information rather than duplicate our efforts and in this way achieve much more. We can revolutionize our agricultural production or make rapid recovery in times of natural disasters by tapping into relevant information from other sources. Remember with the New World Order we either broaden our horizons and react quickly to solve problems or we will simply be left behind. The time for action is now. Let us educate our farmers and people, for if you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

I would like to thank CARDI and CTA for supporting this initiative and hope that their support will go further than just hosting last year's meeting and this one, and that they will continue to guide the Rural Radio Network through its formative years. I would also like you to consider the infrastructure already present in Montserrat when you develop your programme of operations and seriously consider basing your activities, or some of them, in Montserrat.

Finally, I hope that some time be allotted in your programme to enjoy the scenic beauty of Montserrat and to share the warmth and friendliness of our people. And since its so near to Christmas, let us take this opportunity to wish one and all a Blessed Christmas.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

OF

KEY ISSUES

Chairman: **Claude Browne**
 CARDI, Montserrat

Rapporteur: **Denyse Johnston**
 CARDI, Trinidad and Tobago

THE FARMER: UTILIZING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION (STI) TO ENHANCE OUTPUT

Claude Gerald
Director of Agriculture, Montserrat

National concern is for self-reliance of the country while farmers are concerned about their own subsistence and therefore how to cut risks. Farmers therefore need to learn how to deal with internal risks such as weather, pests and diseases, as well as external risks such as the new world economic order. They need information on how to minimize these risks, maximize their limited resources and provide for food security. They also need more information on how to facilitate diversification thrusts. Farmers are constrained by a lack of information. Scientific and technical information (STI) must be transferred laterally and not top-down. It must also be within the scope of the farmer.

In the rural sector, information on a wide range of subjects is needed: agricultural, social, economic, etc. Rural development must include agricultural development and this means educating farmers. The rural sector is dynamic therefore as the situation in the rural environment changes STI must also change to ensure relevance. The information must be usable and related to the needs of the farmer. Since agricultural development is data intensive, the data must be reliable.

Farmers acquire most of their agricultural information through the extension services. Extension faces threats from funding cuts which impact on the delivery and effectiveness of the extension services. This is compounded by urbanization which drains dynamic people from the countryside. The rural sector workforce therefore decreases in size and motivation. Research institutes must therefore find new ways of communicating with the farmer. The most effective of the alternative strategies is radio. It is cost-effective and through this medium farmers can become instruments of progress.

Producing information is always costly. Carrying out research, collecting and processing research data, mobilizing other tangible and intangible resources are expensive activities. Disseminating the information generated must therefore not be neglected. There is a need to match the information requirements of the farmer with the process of obtaining information.

DISCUSSION

Cyril Fergus
Farmer

The bottom line for farmers is making money. We need training in the utilization of funds. Information from extension officers is difficult to get and incomplete therefore

farmers must do their own research. On-farm trials in a real situation is necessary. Radio is important in transferring information but it must be timely and farmers must be able to identify with the programme. Farmers are on the look-out for new technology; for example, this year heavy rains destroyed 75% of my tomato crop. I need information on the construction of screenhouses to prevent a similar occurrence next year.

Hilton Samuel
Nutritionist and farmer

Farmers must perceive the need for the information being transferred, therefore the communicator either has to convince the farmers of the need for the information or work with them to identify needs. Farmers must be involved in the solution of their problems. This means utilizing indigenous technology where it exists. The farmer is a scientist. Farmers in the field observe and come **up** with unique solutions.

In the transfer of information, obstacles to the uptake of information must be identified, e.g., language, appearance. There is a marginalization of people who work with their hands; 'experts' seem higher up the ladder. There must be a merging of the two. If farmers are made to feel important they will want to access information.

There should be STI on how to pass on STI. With respect to external aid: the cure perpetuates the disease. We must decide on what we need and farmers must be involved in finding the solutions.

Gerard Grey
Forestry officer responsible for environmental issues

There is a large body of information which is not in a form which can be used. Farmers and extension officers do not know of the existence of the information or how to access it. Information is also presented in a form which cannot be used by the farmer. Radio can address this. The radio is an alternative to traditional methods.

Farmers can be classified into three categories:

- Seekers of information – these are part-time farmers of a higher educational background;
- Acceptors – these are passive; and
- Traditional farmers – these are interested in using tried and proven methods.

It is important to define the farmer you are trying to reach.

Media campaigns are important in selling environmental education. Programmes for change on a national level can utilize the same means of bombardment – popular theatre, radio, TV, etc.

Production should be market-driven.

THE MEDIA: MEETING THE FARMERS' DEMAND FOR INFORMATION

Claude Hogan
Chairman, Rural Radio Network

In meeting the farmers' demand for information the requirements are:

- A balanced approach. This must be projectized so that it develops into a sustainable activity.
- High level of commitment – which the RRN has.
- Transparency. Everyone must know what we are doing – the approach and the farmers' subculture. This must be absolutely clear and transparent.
- Creation and maintenance of linkages with the academic, business, state and public sectors.

Constraints to the supply of information arise from deficiencies in:

- Training. This has been addressed to a large extent in the region. Communication between the farmer and the RRN is necessary
- Remuneration and budgets
- Perception of the presenter
- Sponsorship
- Information, including the script and how it is presented
- Political commitment

Why radio?

- Cheap
- Pervasive
- Highly trained cadre of radio producers and presenters
- Resources in abundance
- Exchanges are possible
- Commitment from CARDI and CTA

Why the network?

- Avoids duplication
- Maximizes resources
- Strengthens programmes

Positive aspects of the network

- High level of organization and management
- Enhances regional and subregional integration
- Challenges creativity
- Utilization of indigenous practices and technology

- Opportunity for participation at all levels
- A sound core group (visionaries)
- Adequate funding

Recommendations

- Collaboration
- Organization (network distribution)
- Improved remuneration
- Availability of radios
- Identify and attract specialists regionally

Meeting the farmers' demand – Summary of network requirements

Commitment/motivation

Organization and management leadership

Partnership and participation

Transparency

Financing

DISCUSSION

Ellen Lindsay

Farmer

I think that the radio is very good. A lot of what I have learnt is through Radio Antilles.

Wilsie White

Editor, Montserrat Reporter

How can people like us use the media to achieve our goals? Our job is to develop programmes for the media which interpret the past (this involves the old farmer), analyse the present and take the farmer into the future. We are not in a classroom setting, therefore we cannot teach the farmer. We must persuade. Never develop a single programme on any issue. Ideally we should attempt a five-part series, each being able to stand on its own. Parts one to five should address what the farmer has been doing (the past), the present and the future. A sixth part, the conclusion, may also be added. With respect to format: use as much drama as possible.

Rose Willock

Manager, Radio Montserrat

There is no question that there is a need for farmers to acquire the knowledge, and have readily available technical information related to the new technologies available today, if they are to keep up with modern trends and maximize production, thereby perhaps improving their economic lot.

I say 'perhaps' because we know that it does not always follow that because farmers have more to sell they succeed in doing so. Poor marketing practices, unreliable transportation, and sometimes the lack of marketing possibilities are just a few of the problems faced by the farmer. Not forgetting the lack of funds faced by most.

And when I refer to the farmer I do not by any means consider this person to be a part of a homogenous group of people all operating on the same scale, having the same needs, and requiring the same type of service. But rather as a person of either gender coming from a variety of backgrounds with all kinds of demands for goods and services and having all kinds of biases and perceptions. The farmer in Orange Hill in Vincent or perhaps the Marriaqua Valley may have a different kind of need to the farmer in Gouyave, Grenada or Fond Assau in Guyana.

In the Caribbean context any information provided has to be provided within the context of the development aims of the country. And if we buy into the concept that development, certainly in our Caribbean terms, has to also include embracing a people's way of life — their culture — then we have to also consider utilizing all avenues open to us such as the family, the education system, information networks (what we are about over the next few days), etc. We must learn to cope with our needs within the means available to us — the 'basic needs approach' the economists label it. This, by the way, places people at the centre of development and thereby places our focus on programmes suited to particular national situations.

If we also accept the notion that the vast majority of Caribbean people are materially poor and not underdeveloped, then we may have to perhaps totally reject the developed world's method of pursuing development and concentrate more on paying attention to how local people organize themselves to cope with life. It is against this kind of background that I am discussing the topic today.

So, having said all that, let me now say that the various media in the development process have to provide adequate information for the majority of our people in a style, language and level most suited to their specific needs. Quite a task! — quite a responsibility.

So we need to have communicators who are willing to accept this challenge, who feel committed to providing this kind of service and who are ready to explore their perceptions of societal changes and the development process and understand the various communication variables such as channels, media, barriers, needs of target audiences and feedback facilities, etc. It is all this, properly managed, which would determine the success or otherwise of whatever communication programme is devised.

The Caribbean possesses the transmitting technologies which have made it possible for the written and the spoken word, sound and visual images, motion and colour emanating from a single source to reach an infinitely large number of possible interpreters, simultaneously or near simultaneously. Imagine the power inherent in this media, whether it be press, film, radio or television. So this instantaneousness and flexibility of production enable the media to adapt themselves to changing ideas and conditions.

The audio-visual media for instance through the completeness of their presentation can make a profound impact emotionally and intellectually. Their appeal is universal and everyone, illiterate or literate, can receive these messages. These messages, we know, have the power to inform, to persuade, to educate and to entertain. (I learnt the best way to plant a citrus plant by watching Easton Taylor on 'Local Access' demonstrating how to do it).

But I also recognize that there are parts of the Caribbean without electricity or even television. I am sure there are some rural areas in our Caribbean without TV, then such a demonstration would have to be done by the extension officer perhaps?

It seems to me then that what we are saying today is that we need to encourage in our rural populations a scientific attitude. We know how much of our country folk are steeped in prejudices – not only our country folk though – and this tends to stem the tide of progress.

So this calls for a media campaign which to my mind if it is to be successful – if it is to be effective – needs science communicators. (This is something to put to the administrators at CARIMAC). But then, if we have agricultural scientists why not give them a course in communication? After-crisis communication is being addressed; just recently a workshop took place in Barbados where media practitioners were involved with developing a media kit for dealing with disaster preparedness. As communicators we need the experience and guidance if we are not to bungle our way through. (Defence communication is another subject we may need to look at sometime, in order to cope with situations like Haiti).

However, if we are not in a position yet to teach such specialized communication – perhaps because we do not have adequate literature written with indigenous backgrounds or the research potential has not been developed – then let us settle for bringing together the folks with the technical know-how and the communicators to team up and produce the kinds of programmes necessary to provide the type of information which needs to be imparted.

There are some media systems which have included, as part of their service to the community, the concept of development support communication.

Radio Montserrat has its 'Agri tips', although I still look forward to the morning when I tune in and hear honest-to-goodness farmers bringing their perspectives to Agri tips. But maybe that is in the planning!

Please let's make an effort to be sure that the women in our communities are also part of the technology transfer and know-how. This is important if they are to increase their daily productivity. In some communities I am sure there is still the situation where such technology, introduced for the benefit of the women in particular, is taken over by men because of the potential for increased income.

The formats used are so important for getting information, especially of a technical or scientific nature, out to farmers. For example, drama, family drama perhaps incorporating all the players the agricultural technicians want to reach – someone

plays the old-fashioned farmer, someone else the farmer ready to embrace new ways, new techniques, etc.

Have listening centres. Have cassettes available with the material to be listened to when convenient for those female farmers in particular who may be dealing with other chores at the time the material is being broadcast.

Work with the playwrights of the region who can produce the serials and skits which highlight whatever message needs to be relayed. Involve our calypsonians.

Utilize our school children who can take the appropriate information home and who we know can influence their parents.

Networking is important, hence this workshop, but let us not ignore the standard media – tap into those sources as well for reinforcement. Arrange attachments of extension officers to regular media houses. Host production workshops for media and technical agricultural personnel to develop specific programmes geared to target groups. CFPA does it, the tourism organizations do it, so can the agricultural people.

Some considerations

What is the relationship between the RRRN and CNIRD, SPAT, HARC, BRWAOX-FAM, CTA, CARDI, etc.?

Need for easy access to relevant information.

Who will operate the system?

Networking to discuss agricultural issues – make sure bona fide farmers are part of the panel.

Have farmers talking to farmers.

Have endorsements by those farmers who have embraced the new ways.

What information is needed by farmers?

- Weather constraints to planting/reaping – long-range weather forecasts.
- Market conditions: is there a shortage or a glut?; What are the government's plans for importing, say, potatoes, onions...
- Should a 'futures' component be developed? (This is a stock market term which refers to estimating a farmer's crop for a particular season and advancing the farmer the amount estimated to be paid back when the crop is sold)
- New techniques/old techniques explained.
- The dangers of insecticides to the person, the crop, the environment.
- Experience of farmers by farmers.

A farmers information service can be established, developed and operated by CARDI. This, in the true spirit of a network, would facilitate interdependence of the constituent parts. In practical and sociological terms talking with each other is the key to any measure of success.

Together we can do it!

THE CHALLENGES OF A NETWORK: A RADIO ANTILLES CONCEPT PAPER

Keith Greaves
News Director, Radio Antilles

I have been asked to look at the topic: The Challenges of a Network A Radio Antilles Concept.

For the purpose of this exercise, the operative words are 'Challenges' and 'Network', and both are self-explanatory.

By way of background, Radio Antilles 'grew' out of the prickly fields of O'Garros in the south of the island. With its strategically placed array of sky-rocketing antenna networks, came the power giant from Montserrat.

Antilles Radio Corporation (ARC) was incorporated on 20 April 1963. It was a time when the estate economy in the Eastern Caribbean had come to an end and thousands of West Indians were forced to migrate from the sunny shores of the Caribbean to the colder areas of England, the United States and Canada.

But it was also a time when there still existed the dream of a West Indian Federation. The station was granted a broadcasting licence on 16 September 1963. It took a lot of 'arm-twisting', statesmanship and diplomacy by then Chief Minister William H Bramble to convince the British government that a private radio station – boasting 200,000 Watts – was a vital operation for the island's future development, which, as we are aware, has transcended the narrow borders of this 102 km² paradise to the wider Caribbean.

Radio Antilles was started by a Frenchman who came to Montserrat from Europe, then Deutsche Welle – Germany's international voice – later came on board in 1972 and that relationship lasted until just before Hurricane Hugo in September 1989. In that period three other international broadcasters – BBC, VOA and Radio Canada International – have been part of the network.

So you see there was some degree of networking from early. The question of networking is indeed part and parcel of the Radio Antilles concept. This networking concept is particularly pronounced as it relates to news gathering and public information sharing.

I think it is safe to say that Radio Antilles is the only regional broadcasting outfit that maintains a network of news correspondents throughout the Caribbean chain of islands.

The chain stretches from Jamaica in the north to Guyana/Venezuela on the South American mainland. This network has been one of the hallmarks of Radio Antilles and one of the many unique features of the station, quite apart from its incredible power and massive coverage area.

Logically this begs the question: what makes this type of networking challenging? The answer lies in the fact that with only a handful of professionals (this should be taken literally), Radio Antilles consistently produces a high quality news broadcast tailored to suit a Caribbean audience. I should point out that the newsroom staff at Radio Antilles is 4, down from about 10 in the early 1980s.

Of course, in the network line (I must hasten to add) throughout the years, Radio Antilles has been consistently able to attract some of the region's best journalists (all Caribbean nationals) who are competent, reliable, hardworking and highly professional.

To maintain this cadre of top-rated news people, management pays out on a monthly basis large sums of money to the stringers or correspondents.

The seasoned professionals, and in some cases budding aspirants, not only understand the stresses and demands of operating in a network format, but also often extend their services beyond the call of duty. Some of the journalists at one time worked at the station in Montserrat. This helps.

In addition to the established regional news network, Radio Antilles also taps into other regional resources such as various experts at the UWI, medical bodies, Bar associations, regional agencies and organizations. Indeed, we also extend our network outside of the region, even if only on a limited basis because of costs. Our network embraces inputs at national, regional and international levels.

In the 1980s, Radio Antilles invested large sums of money in a daily international news feed from the International Broadcast Service (IBS) in London. The IBS feed provided the station with news correspondents from every corner of the world, right into your living room.

The network format has in many instances been reciprocal. There have been occasions when Radio Antilles has been called upon to provide news and other special programme feeds to sister stations and has exchanged personnel to assist in special projects. The networking concept is becoming more commonplace in the region, especially with the dwindling financial resources in the region.

The Radio Antilles network responds to events as they happen. We do this ever mindful of the television electronic news gathering from our big brothers to the North – CNN, NBC, ABC and CBS. However, because we know the Caribbean we in no way feel threatened. What we strive for is to make the package attractive and informative. This becomes more of an art than a skill, although both are prerequisites if we are to meet the demands placed upon us to adequately meet the challenges posed by our network format.

News staffers are not merely content with reporting the news; some care and attention is taken to sift through the mass of information we get from our correspondents and from other sources – the Caribbean News Agency (CANA), public relations firms, government offices, private groups and individuals. News staffers have to be jacks of all trades, especially in small operations where there is limited scope for specialization

— even though specialization should be encouraged where possible. Meeting deadlines and packaging the product are major challenges.

The networking concept — as we know it at Radio Antilles — has generally led to a fostering of a better understanding between the people of the Caribbean and the African continent.

Noted Caribbean journalist Kikey Singh says: "such cooperation holds out the promise of an improvement, limited though it may be in the initial stages, in the quality of the news and information flow."

The Regional Rural Radio Network is a 'grassroots' approach in that it is decentralized and participatory. Players on this stage, I would think, will be deeply rooted in the national culture concerned.

In closing, I note that in the letter of invitation to address this 'august' regional gathering it was stated that the presentations and discussions are intended to assist you in formatting a radio network to serve the farming community. In helping you to shape this truly commendable project, I would like to leave these pointers with you.

In your productions you must bear in mind that all media subscribe to the tenets of informing, educating, entertaining and — I would go one step further — motivating their publics.

Material should be structured in the appropriate mode for delivery to the respective audiences — in your case the radio audience.

To quote Professor Aggrey Browne, Director of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (CARIMAC), the message design involves:

- Knowledge of the subject matter
- Knowledge of the audience
- Clearly stated goals to be achieved
- Knowledge of the characteristics of the particular medium being used
- Research, analysis and planning
- The message reaching its intended public which depends on:
 - consistency of the message,
 - simplicity of the message,
 - accuracy of the message,
 - coherence of the message,
 - utility of the message.

Through continuous feedback from the people you serve, you will be able to examine and determine whether the development measures you have set are succeeding or failing.

In their publication *The Child in America*, W I Thomas and D S Thomas note: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."

Therein lies the secret to partly dealing with some of the challenges of a network.

DISCUSSION

Jennifer Reddock

Journalist

Programmes must address the needs of the farmer. They must motivate. Communication must be receptive to the needs of the audience. The appeal must be to a wide audience.

The RRN is distinctive, therefore it should have an aim, a focus and a sound.

Farmers in each country must feel that their problems are being addressed. Ideally contributors must be in touch with each other and there must be constant evaluation. The quality of the programmes must be high. Agriculture cannot operate in isolation, especially with respect to rural development. Promotion is important in the initial stages.

Salas Hamilton

Journalist

The pool of resources available must be defined — what is in place and past successes. The movement is towards 'infotainment'. There must be mass appeal. Community radio is about community development. All programmes must be brief, simple and interesting. Although farmers can solve problems themselves, they like to hear regional authorities.

Communication is the key: use the language of the people.

Feedback is important: use the telephone, panel discussions, debates, etc.

TOUR OF RADIO STATIONS

After the presentation of papers and discussions on the afternoon of the first day, the participants went on a tour of the radio stations (GEM, Radio Antilles, Radio Montserrat) and took part in a live half-hour broadcast on Radio Montserrat hosted by Ms Rose Willock.

DEVELOPING THE REGIONAL RURAL RADIO NETWORK

Chairman: Eugene Skerritt
MoA, Montserrat

Rapporteur: Denyse Johnston
CARDI, Trinidad and Tobago

DEVELOPING THE REGIONAL RURAL RADIO NETWORK

Goal

To provide appropriate scientific and technical information to enhance rural agricultural development through a regional radio network.

Objectives

- A. To designate one person as the focal point in each country. An alternate should also be named.
- B. To establish a four-person coordinating committee. The committee will meet twice a year while the whole RRN body will meet once a year.
- C. To establish a clearing/production house which will produce a magazine-type programme and facilitate the exchange of quality programmes and experiences.
- D. To acquire standardized electronic news gathering (ENG) and editing equipment.
- E. To provide relevant training for network members.
- F. To source financing for the RRN system.
- G. To supply information on radio journalism and broadcasting to network members.
- H. To develop an identity for the RRN.

Activities/work programme

Activity	Objective	Responsibility	Resources	Time	Evaluation
1. Designation of focal point	A	CARDI MoA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Unit at CARDI Administrative support Skilled personnel 	31 Dec 1995	Focal point in place
2. Formation of coordinating committee (RRNC)	B	Present members of the RRN		13 Dec 1994	Committee in place

Activity	Objective	Responsibility	Resources	Time	Evaluation
3. Meetings of the RRNC	B	RRNC coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance RRNC Reps. 	On-going (first meeting in Feb 1995)	2 meetings/yr
4. Identification of location for clearing house	C	RRNC MoA in country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing studio facilities Trained personnel Equipment 	Feb 1995	Location identified
5. Maintenance of the clearing house	C	RRN producer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries Additional equipment Material and supplies 	July 1995 pending funds	Clearing house functioning
6. Magazine programme (1/month)	C	RRN producer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from members Production supplies 	Aug 1995 pending funds	Programme on air
7. Exchange of programmes	C	RRN members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material and supplies Standardized equipment 	Aug 1995 pending funds	Programmes exchanged
8. Identification of standardized equipment	D	T Sampson and S Hosein in collaboration with WREN* CTA/RBO		Jan 1995	Equipment identified
9. Procurement and distribution of standardized equipment	D	CTA/RBQ CARDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Personnel Administrative support 	Dec 1995	Equipment in countries
10. Training	E	RRNC CTA in collaboration with CARDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical personnel Finance 	On-going	Trained personnel
11. Human resource assessment	E	RRNC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RRNC Reps. Finance 	Apr 1995	Assessment report

Activity	Objective	Responsibility	Resources	Time	Evaluation
12. Sourcing finance	F				
a) Donor		RRNC CARDI MoAs		Jun 1995	Funds identified
b) Other		RRN members		On-going	Funds identified
13. Supply of information	G	Clearing house RRN members	• Access to sources of information	On-going	Information supplied
14. Identification of symbol or logo	H	RRNC	• Suitable submissions • Finance	Jun 1995	Logo accepted
15. Meeting of the RRN		RRNC CTA	• RRNC Reps. • Finance	On-going	1 meeting/yr

*WREN: World Radio for Environment and Natural Resources.

Coordinating Committee (Objective B)

Claude Hogan Chairperson RRN (Coordinator)
 Denyse Johnston Deputy Chairperson (CARDI/CTA liaison)
 Jeno Jacobs RCC Dominica (Production Adviser)
 Terry Sampson UWI (Technical Adviser)

Terms of Reference for the Coordinating Committee

- Human resource assessment
- Identification of equipment
- Source finance
- Marketing/promotion of RRN (including identifying a symbol/logo)
- Fine tune the operation of the clearing house
- Obtain copyright for magazine programme
- Maintain links with network members (first meeting will be in February after identification of equipment)
- Identify training needs and facilitate training
- Identify staff for clearing house
- Build on strengths of other initiatives in this area
- Develop an organizational structure for the RRN

Clearing House (Objective C)

This will be the central point for editing, collating, etc. It must have adequate resources (to be determined by resource assessment) and good communication links with all the network member countries.

A preliminary resource assessment done on the 2nd day of the meeting identified Dominica, Montserrat, St Lucia and the UWI in Trinidad as possible venues for the clearing house.

Finance Required (Objective F)

- Equipment (capital and maintenance)
- Administrative support
- Meetings (travel, telephone, per diem, etc.)
- Training
- Materials and supplies
- Salary for RRN producer
- Advertising and public relations
- Commissions, production fees, sponsorship

ANNEX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX II

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	American Broadcasting Company
ARC	Antilles Radio Corporation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CANA	Caribbean News Agency
CARDATS	Caribbean Agricultural and Rural Development Advisory and Training Service
CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIMAC	Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System (USA)
CFPA	Caribbean Family Planning Association
CNIRD	Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development
CNN	Cable News Network (USA)
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
CTA/RBO	CTA/Regional Branch Office
CU	Communications Unit (CARDI)
ENG	Electronic News Gathering
IBS	International Broadcast Service (UK)
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NBC	National Broadcasting System (USA)
RA	Radio Antilles (Montserrat)
RCC	Rural Communication Centre (OECS; Dominica)
RRN	Rural Radio Network
RRNC	Rural Radio Network Committee
RRRN	Regional Rural Radio Network
SPAT	Small Projects Assistance Team
STI	Scientific and Technical Information
UWI	The University of the West Indies
VOA	Voice of America
WREN	World Radio for Environment and Natural Resources